

79. *Harmful Effect of Etherization in an Operation upon a Gunshot Wound.* By Mr. LAWRENCE, of Montrose.—As every fact bearing upon the subject of etherization is at present interesting, I make no apology for troubling you with the following brief statement:—

On the 27th ult., E. C., a boy 16 years of age, while firing off a pistol received a part of its contents into the thumb of his left hand, by which fully one-half of its second phalanx was carried away. He was brought to my surgery immediately after, and before proceeding to remove the remaining portion of the phalanx at the articulation, I employed the inhalation of ether in the usual manner. About a minute sufficed to bring him so much under its influence as to permit the necessary incisions without struggling, though not without cries. After sponging the stump, and while seizing the needle to secure the flap by a stitch, he awoke so far to a perception of what was passing, as urgently to request more of the ether to prevent him "feeling the pain." After a few deep draughts of the vapour, the narcotic effect was so powerfully produced, that the needle was thrust through the flap and the skin on the opposite side without the least manifestations of suffering. In a minute or two after, on being spoken to, consciousness returned; but scarcely had he expressed surprise at what had been done, when he was seized with a severe *epileptiform fit*, by which his whole body was violently agitated, and his face rendered turgid and distorted. On being laid in the recumbent posture, and having fresh air freely supplied, he soon recovered, but felt much exhausted, and declared he had (while under the ether) been dreaming he was in a deep pit, from which he thought he would never be extricated. He was shortly after able to walk home. Next day he was perfectly well, and has continued so; and the wound is healing satisfactorily.

The recorded cases wherein the employment of ether inhalation has been attended with injurious or unpleasant results seem to range themselves under two classes:—First, in a certain, and probably much the larger proportion, the unfortunate phenomena have been such as practitioners have been accustomed to observe occasionally in similar circumstances, before the inhalation of ether was thought of; and while this by no means disproves the agency of ether in their production, it ought to prevent the "*post quod ergo propter quod*" mode of reasoning into which we are so readily betrayed. Secondly, in a limited number the unfortunate sequences have been such as could hardly be accounted for, otherwise than by a reference to ether as their immediate cause. To the latter class, I apprehend, belongs the case now narrated. The boy had never previously had a fit, and neither the injury received, nor the subsequent operative procedure, can with much plausibility be regarded as the *direct agent* in the production of the one referred to. But the question may be asked, is it likely that the injury (being a contused lacerated wound, involving nervous and tendinous structures) had *pre-disposed* to the occurrence of the fit? The affirmative is perhaps not altogether a gratuitous assumption. It is well known that such accidents are often the cause of traumatic tetanus, at times following pretty closely upon their occurrence. Is it, therefore, a departure from sober theorizing to suppose, that in this instance there had been produced upon the nervous centres such a degree of that specific morbid impression which in certain circumstances issues in tetanus, as proved adequate, under the superadded influence of the ether, to occasion the paroxysm referred to? From one such case, and even from several, it were obviously unsafe to draw a decided inference; but the gradual accumulation of such facts will, by-and-by, afford the requisite data whence the desired laws of the influence of ether may with some certainty be determined. Meanwhile, this much may be averred, that *facts*, no less than the spirit of true philosophy, rebuke, on the one hand, that scepticism which would reject *in toto* the use of this potent agent, because in some cases unpleasant results have attended it; and, on the other, that false confidence in its virtues which asserts, that under no circumstances can its employment prove injurious.—*Month. Journ. Med. Sci.*, Oct. 1847.

80. *Ether Inhalation—Death.*—On July 10th, at the Hôtel Dieu of the city of Auxerre, a man, aged fifty-five, of a robust constitution, was placed under the influence of ether, for the purpose of undergoing an operation for the removal of a cancerous tumour. After an inhalation of two or three minutes, considerable

agitation was observed in the face and limbs; during five minutes more, the inhalation was continued, and complete insensibility was established. The first incision was performed; but the dark colour of the countenance having attracted the operator's attention, the pulse was felt, and the patient almost immediately expired. On dissection, the brain, lungs, and heart, the liver, kidneys, and spleen, exhaled a strong smell of ether; the blood was dark and viscid, and the lungs were, in their posterior parts, the seat of hypostatic congestion.—*Med. T'nes*, Nov. 20, from *Journal des Connais. Med.-Chirurg.*

81. Ether Inhalation.—The able editor of the *Monthly Journal of Med. Sci.*, in his Number for December last, observes:

"Our readers will remember, that when ether was first introduced, we pointed out that dangerous effects sometimes resulted from its use in certain individuals. These effects, we now know, were entirely owing to the imperfect apparatus, and want of skill employed in its administration. They were not, however, on that account, less dangerous; and a want of proper precautions with the new agent, inasmuch as its power is much more intense, will certainly lead to even greater mischief. In many persons, however, we are bound to say, very grave symptoms have been only hazardous in appearance. We have seen it produce stertorous breathing, foaming at the mouth, tetanic rigidity, and rapid and alarming fall of the pulse; and yet such individuals have recovered as well, and with as little inconvenience, as those who have been thrown into a tranquil sleep. Whilst, therefore, such symptoms should induce extreme caution, observation hitherto has not demonstrated that they are really dangerous."

MEDICAL JURISPRUDENCE AND TOXICOLOGY.

82. Infanticide in China.—With respect to the commonly received reports of infanticide among the Chinese, there can be no doubt, Mr. SMITH (deputed by the Church Missionary Society) took special care, personally, to inquire into this fact. It is practised chiefly among the poorer classes, and it is the female infants who suffer; a poor man, in his old age, usually receiving support and assistance from his sons, whereas his daughters are generally married early, and are then no longer considered as part of the family. On repeated occasions, and before a numerous assemblage, fathers, when questioned by Mr. Smith regarding this subject, seemed to have no hesitation in openly and simply avowing the fact. He was told that, in the province of Fokeen, at a place called Kean Yinghou, five days' journey above Canton, there were computed to be from 500 to 600 infanticides in a month. The comparative infrequency of the practice at Canton arose from the establishment, by government, of a foundling hospital there, where 5000 female children of the lowest classes, were annually received. While visiting some of the villages in the vicinity of Amoy, the subject of infanticide was introduced to the people. They stated that out of six daughters, it was customary to kill three. Some murdered four, and a few even five, out of the same number. They said that the proportion of female children which they put to death, entirely depended on the poverty of the individual. They said that the death of the infant was effected immediately after birth, and that four different modes of infanticide were practised amongst them; drowning in a vessel of water, pinching the throat, stifling by means of a wet cloth over the mouth, and choking by a few grains of rice placed into the mouth of the infant. If sons were alternately interspersed with daughters in a family, the people esteemed it good luck, and were not accustomed to murder the female children. One old man who was questioned, confessed publicly before the crowd, that out of six daughters, he had murdered three. He said that he smothered them by putting grass into their mouth. The people, perceiving the disgust and indignation which the recital of these facts caused, at last became ashamed of their conduct, showing how easily the conscience may be awakened to the enormity of such actions. In the other parts of China, visited by Mr. Smith, no well authenticated cases were brought within his